Nation
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Tremblant Golf Benefit Hits Hole in One

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Opening the door to a brighter future

By Will Nicholls

I've been traveling a lot in the past while. I went to Eastmain for the Grand Council/Cree Regional Authority Annual General Assembly. One of the discussions I had was on meals for students. I was told that a meal program was refused because it was the parents' responsibility to feed their children. I felt this was a red herring as a hungry child doesn't learn. Feed the kids and then you can feed their minds. Later on you can work on parents' responsibilities but you need to be able to teach the kids first. Daniel Mark Stewart, Eastmain's school commissioner, said the Cree School Board is more open these days and would be willing to look at this issue. I know in the past Petit Dejeuner was willing to extend its programs into the Cree communities.

In Mistissini, the Matoush family reunion was a blast. I had Amy write about it because I would have had a conflict of interest as I was a direct descendent of my great-grandparents William and Louise Matoush. Out of around 500 descendants from these two people there were so many youth. A lot of other families across the Cree Nation have grown as large. Many do not graduate though with even a high school diploma. Looking at all the children I wondered how many of them would.

I remember when I was in high school the help I got from guidance counselors. They gave me a test to see what I was interested in, my strengths and what potential careers I would be happy in. Then we looked at potential places where I could get a job or where to post-secondary studies to enable me in a career. This is needed in Eeyou Istchee.

The Cree Human Resources Development (CHRD) has done a great job in looking at the jobs in Eeyou Istchee but a new study is needed. One that examines not only the employment opportunities in the Cree communities but also what the Plan Nord will create. Some will be short-term and others long-term. We need to give the youth hope that a bright future awaits them and to let them know what tools and level of education they need to have a career.

At this year's Cree Achievement Awards Benefit Golf Tournament, I saw those who have graduated and the careers they have. Education has really created opportunities for those who have desire and courage to make it part of their lives. More and more Crees are a part of activities like this and they can afford it. The good life is waiting for any Cree willing to learn what they need to know.

A lack of education and proof of it is the reason why many face hardships. I encourage all to get an education. There are many ways to achieve this. You can contact Continuing Education and complete your high school diploma, contact the CHRD and they'll tell you what programs they have that can fit your needs or simply apply to the Cree School Board.

In any case going back to school, whether it is a high school, trade school, CEGEP, college or university is always a great idea. It gives you more options on a better future for you and those you share your life with.

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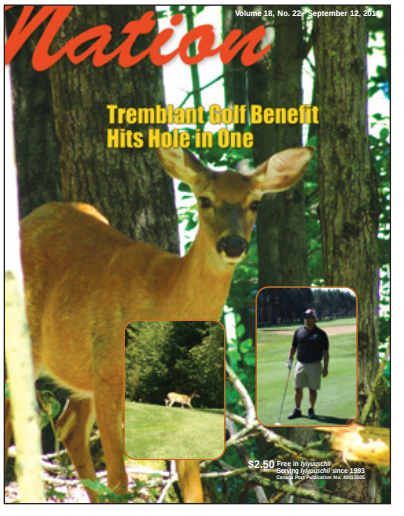

photo by:
Will Nicholls

Winged protein and greased energy

By Sonny Orr

My red-faced daughter rushed into the house to tell me that geese were flying over – the cold early fall winds are already here. Wow, can it be September already? Times goes by fast when you don't have time for life, just work. I am often told that I think of only work and more work… Perhaps I do, but once in a while I slip into hibernation mode. Kinda like a bear without all the harvesting.

Speaking of bears, there seems to be record sightings of bears close to town. I suppose that the great smells emanating from the local dump are doing the trick. And…, oh yes, the berries. I heard that berries are now being celebrated as a cash crop and some nice festivities are becoming the rage for local fall festivals. It used to a little different back in the day…

Harvesting foods that don't have feet or wings – like berries and what not – was not something taken lightly. In fact, berries are a natural and good tasting preservative, when used with other foods, such as fish and meats, grease and anything dried and made out of protein. Come to think of it, dried caribou lungs or anything else gutsy, when completely dried, is like the new protein diet in a bag that's often used and mixed with water or cooked for a few minutes, that sort of thing.

What if we made our own protein in a bag mix made from caribou and other dead animals and call it diet foods? I think that would probably sell like poutine in certain areas of our country and meanwhile lose weight while you quaff down a protein drink that tastes like smoked caribou. MMMM, mmm... Business idea anyone?

Another favourite flavour would be fish and berries… Yummy… they say that the best foods for your brains and for memory enhancement are fish and blueberries. Think of it, a brain-enhancing drink, enabling everyone to remember everything since birth and quite possibly, enable a few to think so fast, they can predict the future.

Now all that protein needs some energy to make it effective. Let's say, some super bimmikan – animal fats laced with cranberries and oatmeal (to appeal to the inner vegetarian in us) and concentrated into brick forms, with a high expansion capacity when combined with a cup of tea and lasts so long in your stomach that it takes a few days to pass, while feeding you a constant stream of calories until the next day. Great for hiking. Imagine a 10-pound pack could feed you for weeks, just in case you get lost on the way to the outhouse.

Ahh, the wonders of big business ideas. Could it be that we might be on the verge of a new wonder fad diet that will actually work? Could the next protein diet package actually be made of real protein? One wonders… perhaps the economic gods are too busy making money and cannot hear the pleas of a wannabe entrepreneur. Unless, you are lucky enough to make it on "the big idea", which is easily Googable and will tell you everything I'm trying to say. So, protein drinks anyone?

My daughter snaps me out of berry-enhanced mind to remind me that geese were flying today, again. Wow, that time of the year again. Get my protein the good old-fashioned way with some good goose calls and a shotgun. For many others, it's the moose call. That protein comes by the ton, but that's another tale to tell of the fabled moose. But hey, it's hunting season and time for the beginning of another protein harvest.

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EDITORIAL BOARD
L. Stewart, W. Nicholls, N. Diamond, E. Webb

EDITOR IN CHIEF
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IYIYUU AYIMUUN EDITOR
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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
D. Coyle, S. Orr, A. German, X. Kataquapit,

PHOTOGRAPHY
A. German, N. Diamond, W. Nicholls, D. Valade

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Linda Ludwick

SALES REPRESENTATIVES
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PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
Claire MacKinnon

THANKS TO: Air Creebec

WHERE TO REACH US:
POSTMASTER:
The Nation PRODUCTION OFFICE
4529 CLARK, #403
MONTREAL, QC., H2T 2T3
EDITORIAL & ADS
TEL.: 514-272-3077, FAX: 514-278-9914
The Nation HEAD OFFICE
P.O. BOX 151, CHISASIBI, QC. J0M 1E0
www.nationnews.ca
E-MAIL ADDRESSES:
Editorial: nation@beesum-communications.com
news@beesum-communications.com
Ads: for Danielle Valade ads@beesum-communications.com
for Ginette Gregoire publicity@beesum-communications.com
Classifieds: beesum@beesum-communications.com

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Sports and youth

Participants at TMSI golf tournament get close to the Stanley Cup

By Daniel Coyle

On August 4, TMSI Sports Management held its 2011 Appreciation Day at eQuinelle Golf Club in Kemptville, Ontario, just outside Ottawa. For the last five years, TMSI has worked closely with the Cree Health Board's Youth Healing Services to provide a variety of sports and wellness programs targeted at young people in a number of Cree communities in northern Quebec.

Most recently, TMSI presented the True North Wellness Hockey Camp in Waskaganish. Participants included members of the Boston Bruins and Phoenix Coyotes scouting staff as well as a number of Bruins prospects, Ollson Sports Group founder John Ollson and former Montreal Alouette and WWF Superstar Glenn Kulka.

In addition to a round of golf on the beautiful new course at eQuinelle, participants also enjoyed early evening festivities at Local Heroes restaurant in Ottawa. The guest of honour at the event was none other than the Stanley Cup, which was on hand courtesy of Boston Bruins Director of Amateur Scouting Wayne Smith, who chose to share his day with the Cup with participants of TMSI Appreciation Day.

"Over the last five years, TMSI has done an excellent job of conducting sports programs for the benefit of Cree kids," said Gord Hudson, Director of Youth Healing Services with the CHB, as he organized pictures with the Stanley Cup for all in attendance. "The folks at TMSI have shown a real commitment to helping us meet our goals of teaching our kids about living a good healthy lifestyle. It has been a positive partnership."

Darin McCorriston of TMSI was very enthusiastic about the work his company has done in Quebec's Cree communities.

Lisa Petagumskum kissing the cup

Wayne Smith and Steve Cheechoo

Darin McCorriston and Lisa Petagumskum

"Our work with the Cree Health Board has let us take advantage some of the great tools and partners we have to do something good in the community."

Indeed, TMSI's business is focused on the ownership and management of recreational facilities throughout the Ottawa region. In addition to the hockey programs that TMSI coordinates with its partners, the company successfully manages multiple tennis, golf, football and soccer facilities and programs. TMSI also designs, builds and manages air-supported domes. These domes provide year round climate control, allowing sports to continue throughout the winter.

McCorriston plans on making the Cree Health Board Appreciation Day an annual event.

"This event gives us a great opportunity to spend more time with our friends and partners in Quebec's Cree communities. We want to create something that will get bigger nest year," declared McCorriston.

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Celebrating the berries

Oujé's blueberry festival comes off without a hitch

By Amy German

According to the Oujé-Bougoumou Traditional Blueberry Gathering Festival's event emcee, Jonathan Saganash, this year's fest was just about the best ever.

Running from August 14-21, this major community event brought in over 1000 visitors to check out the daily activities and nighttime entertainment as well as to sample the celebrated gastronomic contests.

According to Saganash, the festival put on contests for best blueberry jams, pies and bannock as well as one for blueberry picking. There was also a wide variety of children's activities at the event, with all sorts of inflatable games and water games to keep the little folks occupied.

The nights at this festival were kept colourful with musical and comedic entertainment that featured cover band High-Fives, Claude Mackenzie, U2 Tribute Band and comedian Don Burnstick. The community was also treated to a fireworks extravaganza on the Saturday night.

While the community of Oujé and visiting Crees all had the opportunity to revel in the festivities, Saganash said the event was also about showcasing Native culture to the local Québécois and the world.

"The idea was to show the world the Cree's traditional ways with blueberries on our land and to also have an exchange with neighbouring communities. That is how we have been regarding this event for the last three years," said Saganash.

And the event attracted people not only from nearby Chibougamau, Chapais, and Lac St-Jean but from as far away as Italy and France.

During the festival, Burnstick, who has a lengthy history in community development as well as comedy, held workshops with 30 of the community's youth to share his messages about community.

"The workshops were more about working together as a people because sometimes we Native people are our own worst enemies with jealousy, back biting and gossip. So, we need to learn how to support each other better because we are losing so many of our young people to substance abuse, dropping out of school and teen pregnancy. It's the adults who need to come together instead of fighting, arguing and backbiting all of the time," said Burnstick.

"I HAVE A LOT OF RESPECT FOR THE CHURCH AND WHAT THEY BELIEVE IN BUT THE SWEAT LODGE, **THE SWEET GRASS AND THE DRUMS WERE HERE LONG BEFORE THE BIBLE WAS** AND WE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT TOO."

Burnstick, who said he was only too happy to share his skills and gifts with the people of Oujé, was there in part to do these workshops because of the divisive community dispute last winter over a backyard sweat lodge that was forcibly torn down by the community. The incident has left a lasting impact on the community.

"I have a lot of respect for the church and what they believe in but the sweat lodge, the sweet grass and the drums were here long before the bible was and we need to acknowledge that too. I have been to a lot of communities where they use both to enhance the beliefs and the spirituality of the people and this is not something meant to divide or ostracize people," said Burnstick.

And with that, Oujé's event not only brought about enjoyment and sharing but also healing to a community that was ripe for the mega dose positive energy brought about by a successful week of celebrations.

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Rezolution Pictures' new show hits APTN

Now from Rezolution Pictures, the Gemini-winning film, television and interactive media production company that has produced international hit, Reel Injun, award-winning Club Native and a whole slew of other TV and film successes, comes a new series: Working It Out Together.

Starting September 6 at 8:30 PM on APTN and at www.workingitouttogether.com tune in to watch host Olympian Waneek Horn-Miller as she launches an innovative new program and platform that is about finding wellness through Aboriginal philosophy, traditional foods and western medical practice.

This six-part series will chronicle six Mohawk individuals as they make positive changes in their lives to regain their health and vitality through different means while the show's website can help those at home track their own successes simultaneously.

Look for the show this fall season and with it, start your own wellness kick.

New study: Inuit are starving and/or eating all of the wrong things

A new McGill University study is showing that there is a diet crisis amongst the Inuit as six out of 10 are either starving or eating the wrong foods.

A comprehensive study conducted by several McGill researchers is warning the government that preventative measures need to be put into place now so to prevent diabetes and heart disease amongst the Inuit of Canada's far north.

According to the researchers, the problem arises out of a transition amongst the Inuit peoples to move from a traditional to a western diet. However, many Inuit cannot afford the fruits, vegetables and whole grains needed to maintain proper health.

The issue of food insecurity is largely responsible for a series of food-related chronic health issues that are caused by eating nutritionally poor food, skipping meals or going hungry amongst the Inuit people. While obesity and diabetes occurs on one end of the spectrum, malnutrition is happening on the other.

The study, by McGill epidemiologist Grace Egeland, was recently published in the latest issue of Journal of Nutrition.

Canada ignoring Aboriginals in health studies

Though Canadian Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq outlined how the country will be spending $21 million over five years to conduct research on how to address gaps in health equality domestically and abroad, not one of these studies will directly target Canada's Indigenous peoples.

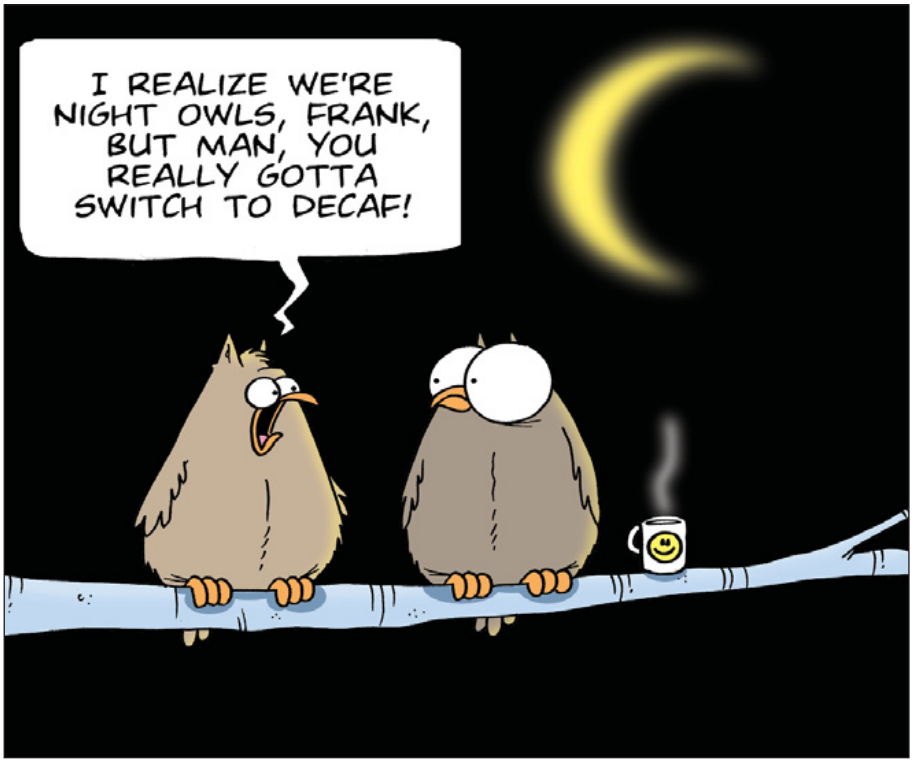
While First Nations groups have long complained about the inequities between health care for Aboriginals when compared to the rest of the country, Aglukkaq said she is confident that these studies will be of benefit to all Canadians.

In late August, Aglukkaq defended the studies to the CBC.

"I'm not afraid of that because we have to look at health care overall instead of silos. The project does not specify one ethnic group or another. It is very inclusive that way. The projects that are being rolled out in terms of research will include every Canadian and will contribute to improving the inequities that we are currently seeing throughout the country," said Aglukkaq.

Though no specific Aboriginal communities were targeted in any of the five major studies the government will be funding, Aglukkaq said that Canadian health would be looked at in a broader sense.

However, only time will tell if the needs of Aboriginal Canadians, who suffer significantly poorer health than the rest of the country, will actually be counted in this costly research.



Comic strip courtesy of Tundra Comics: www.tundracomics.com

Good times in Tremblant for a good cause

Cree Nation fundraiser for achievement goes off without a hitch

by Amy German

For the second year in a row, hundreds of Crees and partners of the Cree world descended upon Mont Tremblant for a massive golf benefit to raise funds for the Cree Nation Achievement Foundation.

Setting off in teams of four, on August 26, Crees and various sponsors and other business partners tackled either Le Géant or Le Diable golf courses for a massive tournament and then later congregated for a world-class-style gala dinner at the Mont Tremblant convention centre.

At the event, hosted by Native comedian and activist Don Burnstick, it was announced that between the day and evening festivities that included the tournament, gala and auctions at the gala, a total of $60,249 was raised for the new foundation.

While the weather held up for an all-out cloudless day of golfing with the likes of former hockey giants Marcel Dionne and Stan Jonathan, the evening entertainment proved just as gratifying.

Burnstick, known for his distinctly Native jokes, kept the crowd roaring all night.

"Everybody is trying to be like Natives these days. You've got Arnold Schwarzenegger who had two different women giving birth to his kids two days apart from each other, Brad Pitt who has six kids with Angelina Jolie and only three of them are his and Lindsay Lohan who's been to rehab five times and is still drinking," said Burnstick.

On the more serious side, Eddie Diamond of the Grand Council of the Crees/ Cree Regional Authority was happy to report to the Nation that a lot of progress had been made in terms of laying all of the groundwork for the Cree Nation Achievement Awards Foundation.

"Right now we are about two-three weeks away from getting the whole thing incorporated. At the moment we are also looking for a Cree name to give the foundation to make the whole thing unique," said Diamond.

He delighted in pointing out exactly how much steam the foundation had gained over the last 12 months as several other charitable organizations are looking to partner up with the new Cree Foundation to help support children succeed in athletics.

At the same time, the foundation is gearing up to have its first gala awards celebration in 2012 that will recognize Crees in a variety of fields that range from volunteerism to academics to corporate citizenship to community and cultural contributions.

According to Diamond, this organization won't just be about recognizing political figures but the little guys who have given their all at whatever their field may be.

Because of the good work that this organization will be doing in the coming years, the day's participants were all thrilled to be part of such an event and happy to state why they had taken their time to show their support.

"This is a very important cause. We are looking at different ways to celebrate achievement, volunteerism and reaching out to the youth and so I think that those are all very worthy causes," said Quebec's Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, Geoffrey Kelley.

Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Chief Ghislain Picard was also out on the links to benefit the Crees and just as proud to be celebrating Cree successes at night.

"It is important to be able to support these kinds of initiatives and anything that will help to promote and support our communities for our young people. Whenever I hear about events like this, I always make it a point to be there if it is possible for me," said Picard.

A newly svelte Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff was also feeling the jubilant vibe in the room as much as he was thrilled about the success of the event.

"It's an awesome event because we are with all of our partners in the Cree world and people are contributing to something that we are going to be doing in the Cree nation to recognize people officially for their achievements," said Iserhoff.

Former Boston Bruins great Stan Jonathan spoke at the gala about his life story in hockey and what it was like to rise as a hockey star from a reserve family of 14 children. He

While staying in Mont Tremblant...

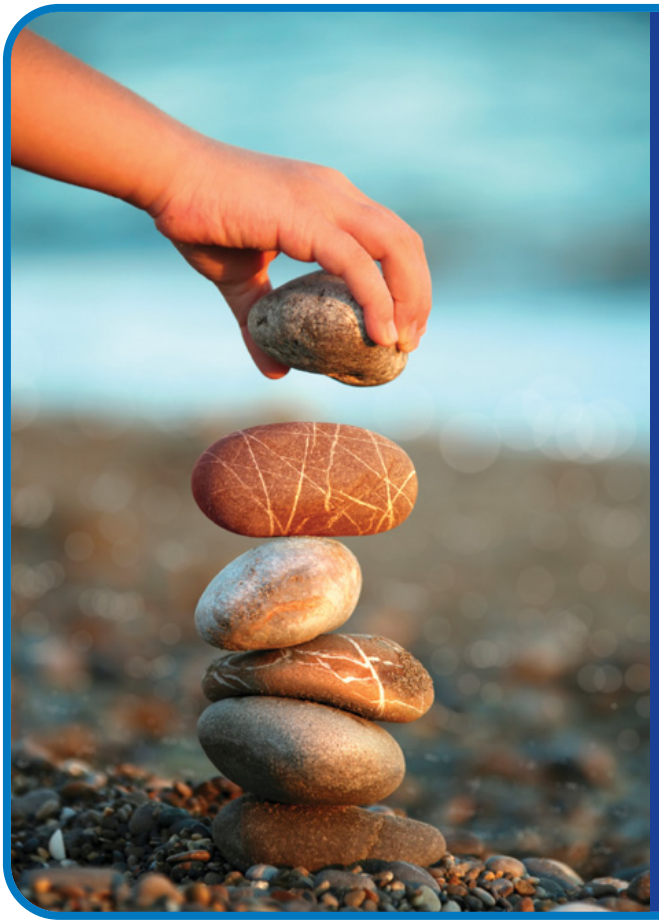
While attending the Cree Nation Achievement Awards Foundation golf tournament and gala in Mont Tremblant, Nation editor-in-chief Will Nicholls and I had the privilege of staying at the luxurious Fairmount Tremblant Hotel.

Our lofty two-room suite provided for the perfect and ultimately chic homebase to explore Tremblant's many activities and delicacies. Much to our surprise, having heard of our arrival, the hotel managers chose to welcome us with a delightful bottle of Italian red wine and cheese plate to get us the

mood for both relaxation and a little adventure.

While Nicholls spent his day out on the links and explored Mont Tremblant's nightlife, being rather pregnant, I decided to opt for some more low-key activities and to see what kinds of family-fun options were available to patrons in the area.

In terms of daytime fun, families are truly in luck in Tremblant as the mountain offers limitless kids activities, like luge rides, a climbing wall, a children's



"The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small stones."

~ Chinese Proverb

To all new and returning students, we wish you the very best of success this academic year!

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joked during his speech that he learned to fight at home, just trying to get a seat at the dinner table.

In reality, Jonathan rose as a hockey star during a time when Aboriginal players were not as celebrated as they are today since the hockey world was a lot more racist back in the mid-'70s.

Of course, he said, an organization like the ones the Crees are forming could have helped him a great deal back then, but they didn't exist. At the same time his message to the Cree nation was to encourage the youth as much as possible and support them in their dreams whatever they may be, particularly when it comes to those youth leaving the reserve as this was something he understood deeply. He remarked that a lot of kids will quit and come back home if they don't get adequate support.

"The biggest experience I've had that I share with Cree kids nowadays is that if they get a chance to go out there and play and set some goals for themselves, there are some unbelievable hockey players from all of our different nations.

"Kids, all kids, just need to go out and show that they can play, it doesn't have to be hockey but whatever they are good at, they just need to get out and do it," said Jonathan.

Ed Note: Before anyone talks I will admit publically that I went beyond what most men would do to win a prize at this event. When prizes were offered at the gala for various actions or things I responded in the best way I knew how. For an opportunity to access an indoor golf driving range I was the first to respond to the criteria of having a hickey. I did not have one when they called for it but fortunately my wife Amy helped me out and some of the crowd got to see a hickey happening before their eyes. The Emcees started to give up but I yelled we were working on it. I am proud to say I was branded by my woman and I received my just deserts. I was known as the guy who had a hickey for the rest of the night. – Will Nicholls

"IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THESE KINDS OF INITIATIVES AND ANYTHING THAT WILL HELP TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITIES FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE."

adventure club, a beach and tennis club, boat rentals on the lake, cruises and much more!

Not having the energy or the physical means to actually try any of this, I decided that I would walk the concierge dog, Gracie, a yellow lab that hangs out in the lobby from Monday-Friday during business hours.

Gracie had to be about the most placid pup I have ever encountered in my life. There on her dog mat or lying, splayed out on the tiles, this sweet gal had children climbing all over her just about every time I saw her and seemed to enjoy every moment of it.

Perhaps it was the dead August heat but when it came to our morning excursion date, Gracie wasn't having any "walkies." While she reveled in the affection every time children came by to pet her, she was a little mule-like on a leash and required a tug every few minutes to keep moving. Finding the situation only too hilarious, I was happy to rest my swollen body and let random Cree children from the north we kept running into just pet her instead.

With my morning exercise done, I decided to treat my body to some luxuriation time beside the pools, which, in my state, felt like heaven on earth.

I would highly suggest Tremblant as a destination for a "baby moon" as it is elegant, charming, user friendly and one of the few places I have ever seen with a cold whirlpool, something that provided my swollen ankles with endless relief. There were actually loads of families with small children doing exactly what I was doing, relaxing on a chaise longue, ordering periodic nibblies from room service and dipping into the pools or the hot or warm or cold tubs whenever the moment struck. The simplicity of it was so satisfying, I really didn't want to leave.

While we enjoyed two incredible mornings of out-of-this-world breakfast buffet at the hotel, for dinner on our first night we decided to go with the gastronomic buzz around town at Mont Tremblant's Le Forge steak house. For those into grilled delights and fine wines, this gem of a restaurant did not fail to impress.

Car Wash

Improving the game

Mistissini hockey camp increases the chances of success for young Cree players

By Daniel Coyle

Twelve-year old Judith Neeposh of Mistissini will soon get her first taste of international hockey competition. A member of the Cree Nation Bears AAA Girls Under-14 hockey team, Judith was recently invited to travel in January to Saco, Maine, where she will try out for a spot on the East Coast Selects. If she makes the team, Judith will have the opportunity to travel to Europe with the Selects next spring to compete against some of the best young female hockey players in the world.

Judith comes from a hockey family. Her father Kevin played in the QMJHL and her cousin Silas Neeposh is currently in training camp with the QMJHL Chicoutimi Saguenéens. But as far as Kevin Neeposh is concerned, good hockey genes have had little to do with his daughter's success. For this hockey dad, the secret of his daughter's early hockey success has been discipline, hard work and participation in a recent hockey camp managed by Westlake Hockey Development.

The brainchild of Carl Michaelson, assistant coach of the Hobart College Statesmen of the NCAA's ECAC West conference, and Matthew Lombardi, of the NHL's Toronto Maple Leafs, Westlake Hockey Development offers hockey programs that assist young players at all levels to improve not only their hockey game, but also their physical conditioning, personal discipline, lifestyle choices and participation in the community.

For the fifth straight summer, Westlake conducted a five-week hockey program in Mistissini which was attended by over 60 young players ranging in age from 9 to 17. While the program includes a great deal of ice time for the young participants, running drills and playing in scrimmages is only one part of the program.

"The idea is to offer a full development program and provide the kids with access to high-end coaches and instructors. We offer everything to do with hockey on and off ice," explains Michaelson. "But there is more to it than that. When you sum it all up, our program is all about what is to be an adult – to live a healthy lifestyle, to learn respect and be decent human beings."

Michaelson backs up his philosophy with strong credentials. A graduate of Hobart College, where he also played four seasons of NCAA hockey, Michaelson has extensive experience in strength and conditioning, and has instructed players on topics such as health and wellness, sports psychology, injury prevention, performance training, stride development, speed and agility, hockey skills training, and movement and performance analysis. He has also spent time coaching elite level hockey teams. But for both Michaelson and hockey dad Kevin Neeposh, perhaps the most important aspects of the program are those that teach personal discipline and instill a sense of community responsibility and pride in the young players.

"Every day of the program we spend hours doing community activities," said Michaelson. "We break the kids into groups and have them go around picking up garbage, cleaning up the town. We want them to realize that 'this is your town, be proud of it!' The idea is for them to definitely realize that they must take care of their community. They need

Blue Team win's Week #1 Somebody's Bucket

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Goaltending Instruction

Judith Neeposh's team, the Cree Nation Bears AAA Girls U-14

to learn values and then see the value in applying what they have learned in their daily lives."

Other community activities that participants in the Westlake camp have organized include a car wash to raise money for a family where the mother is battling cancer, and spending time with Elders in the community, learning and participating in a number of traditional activities.

"One of the things that we see today is that it is tough for young Crees to learn about their culture and heritage," said Michaelson. "We want to keep them active and participating. Crees have a phenomenal culture and we try to get the kids involved with activities and work with the Elders, and it is a lot of fun."

The young players participating in the Westlake Hockey Development camp are also required to maintain a daily journal for the duration of the five-week camp, where among other things, they are asked to write down everything they eat on a daily basis. Keeping the journal not only impacts the young player, but also their family.

"Sometimes when we cook, she says no, we are not supposed to eat that," says Neeposh with a laugh. "It has taught her good values and how to train, and what to eat."

"Not only do we ask them to write down what they eat, but recognize how they feel after they eat," adds Michaelson. "And once they give us back those journals, we discuss that with the kids. You can train as hard as you want but if you don't have proper nutrition, it is tougher to succeed. It is all about what you put into your body."

Indeed, the Westlake Hockey Development program has had a major impact on young Judith's overall fitness. Over the course of the five-week program, Judith lost 10 lbs and has continued to follow the training programs she first learned from her Westlake instructors.

"My daughter has gained a big edge with Westlake," said Neeposh. "She has lost 10 lbs and is eating better. And she is still training, running, doing her bike – whatever Westlake taught her to do. I give credit to Westlake. They have helped her also really improve in her skating and puck handling and that has made the difference in her getting selected to go to Maine."

Given Westlake's success during its five summers in Mistissini, it is not surprising that Michaelson plans on expanding programs both in length and reach.

"I am really happy with the job our instructors have done in Mistissini. We have added a goalie instructor, and we want to double the size of the camp to 60 skaters and eight goalies per age group," says Michaelson. "Right now, we are only in Mistissini. But, we think it is no brainer to try to grow the program in other communities. I think it is a great opportunity for kids in other communities to come and participate."

If Judith Neeposh's recent success is any indication, Westlake Hockey Development hockey camps will be warmly welcomed in many communities across Quebec and Ontario.

A clan in the hundreds

Descendants of the Matoush ancestry meet and greet

By Amy German

When my husband Will Nicholls told me that he had hundreds and hundreds of cousins many years ago, I found it hard to fathom just how many he meant. As it turns out, he was talking about 500 family members, a fact I only discovered recently.

A few months ago, an invite popped up on Facebook announcing a reunion for the descendants of William and Louisa Matoush, my husband's great-grandparents.

And so, being almost in my third trimester of pregnancy with what will be their great-great-grandson, we headed to Mistissini to reconnect with a family that has grown exponentially over the generations.

While I was unable to determine when William and Louisa were born, I know they died elderly in the early 1970s. What I also know is that though they had 13 children, only four of them survived. And so it was incredible to think that in just four or five generations, there are now approximately 500 of these descendants who came from the two wizened Elders whose faces I kept seeing as they were printed out on the hundreds T-shirts that the family had specially made for this event.

Though the event was supposed to be held at "The Point," a large, point-shaped family property that juts out into Lake Mistissini where Will's Uncle Don Macleod lives, the morning's events were rescheduled for the Mistissini Lodge on account of the rain.

When we finally made our way to the festivities, the clan was halfway through their fellowship prayer service, where family members were taking turns sharing prayers, scripture and memories of their beloved grandparents and great-grandparents.

Among the direct descendants of William and Louisa were Will's great uncle, "Steady" Ed Matoush (he had 15+ kids), and his sister, Maggie, whose 80th birthday was being celebrated simultaneously at the festivity.

It was Maggie who wrapped up the hour-and-a-half-long prayer service, speaking passionately about Jesus and her parents…. Well, I am guessing that was what she was speaking about as it was in Cree but I was afraid to ask anyone to translate for fear of breaking their focus. Unlike life in the south, everyone who was in the room was deeply focused on Maggie and her words of wisdom as though entranced.

Coming from a different culture, I can honestly say that this is something that is quite remarkable as though we will give our elders the time of day down south, the respect and honour that they command in Cree culture is unlike anything I've ever witnessed.

The rest of the day was spent with an afternoon devoted to children's activities, as there were more than enough of

them to fill a few classrooms and then an evening BBQ that culminated into musical entertainment put on by various family members and a birthday cake for the new octogenarian.

Sitting down with my mother-in-law, Dorothy Nicholls, I asked what her grandparents would have said had they been there to witness this gathering.

"Agoodah gee bah (that's all right by me)," she said, "that is what our grandfather would have said had he been here."

Aside from celebrating Aunt Maggie's birthday, I asked Dorothy why this kind of celebration was important to her as I was hearing so many different perspectives on this question throughout the day.

"It was important to do because we are so large now that we don't know each other. This is the first time we have ever brought all of us together. There were supposed to be 500 of us here but I wouldn't say that there is that many, maybe 200-250 and so maybe half but that in itself is marvelous.

"Some of the people I see, especially the younger ones, I don't know who they are. But this party is also so that our children can get to know who they are related to. There is a big thing here about our children knowing each other and that is important because they are family. Now the next time they see each other they can say 'Hi, we were at the reunion together'," said Dorothy.

Her younger brother, James Bay Cree Communications Society's Luke Macleod, said he was very happy about the day and how great celebration had been.

Macleod, who had been one of the driving forces behind the reunion and relative round up for it, said it had been an idea that in light of a few recent deaths within the family, he had finally realized just how distant some of the family had become. That and the fact that some of his uncles and his late mother had also expressed the desire to see this event happen but it didn't take shape in time for her to see it, having passed away back in the '90s.

Reflecting on his grandparents and the time he had with them, Macleod said he had the good fortune of having lived with them for a period before he started school.

"When my grandfather passed away, I was away at school and so I couldn't come home for that. This was something that really affected me. It was those thoughts that came back to me today.

"I thought that when I lost my grandfather, I realized that I was going to miss out on a lot of things that he could have taught or passed down to me. This is how I felt when I was away.

"Not too long ago I met some people who had lived with him and had been raised by him and hunted with him and they talked about all of the things that he taught them. It made me realize that even though I had missed out, there were people around who knew (some of his knowledge) and those people include my uncles – they knew the skills that he had to pass on.

"So these are the things that I think of a lot when I think of them," said Macleod.

Macleod's daughter Pam was also integral in planning the reunion and never seemed to stop working at set-ups and tear-downs throughout the whole event. Having just returned from several months in England on an educational exchange, she said she felt particularly motivated in planning the event as it was family that she missed the most when overseas.

"IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DO BECAUSE WE ARE SO LARGE NOW THAT WE DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE EVER BROUGHT ALL OF US TOGETHER. "

Enriching the whole reunion experience for Pam was the fact that she too was discovering so many new family members.

"There are so many of us! Even when we first started organizing this, I didn't realize that there are people that I see every day around here who would actually be here today as I am actually related to them.

"So it is nice just to be able to talk to them because you know, you recognized them but never said hi and so I think that this was just a really good opportunity to connect with new ones and that kind of thing," said Pam.

Wally Wapachee, who came in from Oujé-Bougoumou, beamed with glee while he spoke to me, saying how he was on the Matthew and Maggie Wapachee side of the family and that unfortunately his two sons couldn't attend the event.

"When I look at the DNA here of all of this family and everyone standing around in here, I think these genetics are really outstanding as there are a lot of good-looking people here who are laughing and there are certainly a lot of beautiful women.

"We really have a wonderful opportunity here. I keep hearing people play music and this is just wonderful as there seems to be a lot of talent in these genes, it's really good DNA that's being passed down," said Wapachee.

"WHEN I LOOK AT THE DNA HERE OF ALL OF THIS FAMILY AND EVERYONE STANDING AROUND IN HERE, I THINK THESE GENETICS ARE REALLY OUTSTANDING AS THERE ARE A LOT OF GOOD-LOOKING PEOPLE HERE WHO ARE LAUGHING AND THERE ARE CERTAINLY A LOT OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN."

The only thing Wapachee said he really wanted to see at the next event was a way of deciphering what generation people are and what their names are via T-shirts and name tags.

He said he hoped the next time the clan gathers it could be at William's Lake in the Otish Mountains on the grounds that William and Louisa Matoush would have hunted on.

"A lot of us here have probably never been up there and I think it would be a wonderful opportunity for everybody to

go and see all of the cranberries and make some cranberry juice. We could climb up the mountain that overlooks the area where our grandparents used to hunt, fish and live," said Wapachee.

Elder Ed Matoush was only able to speak with me through the help of Dorothy Nicholls who acted as my translator and guide to the family tree. Rather than reflect on his memories of his parents, Matoush told me about how the clan had settled in Mistissini to begin with, clearing away the first part of the reserve for habitation, a little spot the family still lives by the water called The Point.

"It was my grandfather, my father, and Emmett Macleod, my brother-in-law, who did this. I was born in the bush but many of the children and grandchildren were born on that point. That would be Maggie Wapachee's family, Emmett's family and pretty much all of our family," said Matoush.

But why there I asked as there are so many other spots that looked seemingly as good.

Matoush said his grandfather told his father, "Let's go to shore here and let's settle on this point." Macleod opened up his first kind of store. Matoush said it was in a tent at first but later on that they built the store. But, it was Matoush's grandfather who suggested that they build there.

Currently Don Macleod lives on that point.

Matoush said because they started to clear the land from the point, the government actually then asked them to start clearing upward, toward the ridge. "While we didn't receive money for it, they gave us food," said Matoush.

He said that later on others came to the point, like Charlie and Jacob Blacksmith. "They said to my grandfather that they wanted to clear the land like he was doing and so my grandfather wrote down their names so that they could receive food as well and that is how they started to clear the point."

As people had been taking up a collection for Maggie's 80th birthday, when she was presented with almost $1000 at the end of the night, the Elder began to cry and gave a speech about what she would like to do with it.

She began to talk about a dream she had about the old days and the kind of tents her father used to build. In the dream someone came up to her and told her that the tent in front of her was her father's but that he did not have a chance to finish it, that it was up to her to finish it.

With the money she received from everyone at the party, Maggie said she wanted to use it to go visit the ancestral lands where her family used to hunt.

Honing medical skills

Non-profit organization offers courses to Native medical professionals online

By Amy German

For any First Nations, Inuit or Métis working in the medical field who has wanted to brush up or enhance their knowledge from the comfort of their own home, free of cost, Saint Elizabeth may just have something to offer you.

According to Saint Elizabeth program assistant, Suzanne Stephenson, Saint Elizabeth Health Care is not a school per se but rather an organization that has been around since 1908 with a vision of honouring the human side of health care.

"The idea behind the organization is to bring health care to people and so for instance, a lot of what Saint Elizabeth does is home-care visits by nurses and other health-care workers who will come into someone's home to offer care in various contexts," said Stephenson.

As part of their mission to address the gaps within Aboriginal communities throughout Canada, for the last decade the organization has offered a series of pertinent health-care courses with the idea of working towards equalizing access to health care in that area.

"We are able through federal, provincial and charitable funding to offer these courses at no cost to First Nations communities and so it's not a school but an online e-learning platform for these communities," explained Stephenson.

Through Saint Elizabeth's At Your Side program, medical professionals, such as nurses, community health representatives and those in other related fields, can chose from a wide variety of courses geared at enhancing their current knowledge in on specific topics.

"At the moment we are offering programs to address various health problems that affect First Nations. For instance, we currently have a cancer-care course available that is given in both English and French and that course is offered in partnership with the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer," said Stephenson.

At Your Side offers a diabetes circle of care course, a chronic pulmonary disease course and there are also courses in wound management and computers as well such as a personal support worker course – one for senior care, one for cardiac care and one for clinical skills

These courses are not geared at replacing a formal certificate program from a Cégep or college however, they are about helping those already in the field who may want to brush up in a specific area or find out what the latest information is in that area.

"We offer current, up-to-the-minute information on health-care issues and another feature of the courses is that they also include culturally appropriate and relevant content. So, for instance, they will mention traditional as well as western medicine approaches," said Stephenson.

What makes At Your Side even more appealing is that individuals taking the courses can do so at their own pace and whenever they would like – 24 hours a day, seven days a week – there is absolutely no time limit.

Since the program is more about knowledge delivery instead of certificate training, individuals who want to brush up on a specific area of a course are welcome to go through that module. Students don't have to complete the entire course if they don't want to.

At the end of each course, students can take the knowledge test for that specific course to see if they have successfully learned what the course has to offer. But if they feel they have not attained their goal, they are always welcomed to re-do the course.

"The ultimate goal is to improve care for people and there are numerous other resources as well. Learners also have the option of participating in discussions with other people taking the same course. As well as having 24-hour access to the course they also have access to peers and not only peers taking the course but also experts in that field. This happens via discussion forums within the course website," said Stephenson.

Those who take the courses are always welcomed to do follow-up learning via the webinar series that is offered as part of At Your Side so that the knowledge offered by this program is limitless.

For more info: http://fnim.atyourside.ca/

"WE OFFER CURRENT, UP-TO-THE-MINUTE INFORMATION ON HEALTH-CARE ISSUES AND ANOTHER FEATURE OF THE COURSES IS THAT THEY ALSO INCLUDE CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE AND RELEVANT CONTENT. SO, FOR INSTANCE, **THEY WILL MENTION TRADITIONAL AS WELL AS WESTERN MEDICINE APPROACHES.**"

What's in a lunchbox?

Things the kiddies should and shouldn't be eating come lunchtime

By Amy German

As families are finally getting back into the groove of back-to-school rituals a few weeks into classes, what children should and shouldn't be eating come lunchtime really can make a difference in their overall health.

A new U.S. study by the Harvard School of Public Health has suggested that eating two slices of bacon, a hotdog or a serving of deli meat daily can significantly boost the chances of one day getting Type 2 diabetes. For those with a predisposition to diabetes, this news can be especially troubling.

> "THERE ARE ALSO TRADITIONAL MEATS AS CREES HUNT AND SO THEY OFTEN HAVE MOOSE, GOOSE AND CARIBOU AND THESE ARE VERY GOOD AS THEY ARE REALLY HEALTHY."

Not to panic says Waswanipi dietician Bonnie Leung as eating these kinds of highly processed meats on a daily basis can cause weight gain that can in turn lead to Type 2 diabetes, she does not see the link as being as direct.

Instead, she said, when it comes to preparing lunchtime meals for children, simply opt to eating healthier.

"In the north, a lot of people find themselves without time as they have a one-hour break for lunch and they have four or five kids to take care of and feed during that time. So often what ends up happening is that they will get poutine or serve Kraft Dinner which are things that can be served really fast," said Leung.

Instead, when it comes to midday meals for families on the go, Leung suggests that parents make their child a sandwich on whole wheat bread using lean meats, low-fat cheese or canned fish, like tuna or salmon, and to include a vegetable like lettuce. Another quick option is canned soup that a parent can add frozen vegetables to if they find themselves pressed for time and unable to chop up vegetables while in a rush.

In that processed meats, such as hotdogs, bacon and high-fat deli meats, aren't really good for anyone, the best option is to take the time if you can to prepare meats in advance to have for lunch the next day.

"There are also traditional meats as Crees hunt and so they often have moose, goose and caribou and these are very good as they are really healthy. The parent can prepare other meats like chicken without the skin or pork chops but the fat cut off and not fried since the idea is to prepare it without the fat," said Leung.

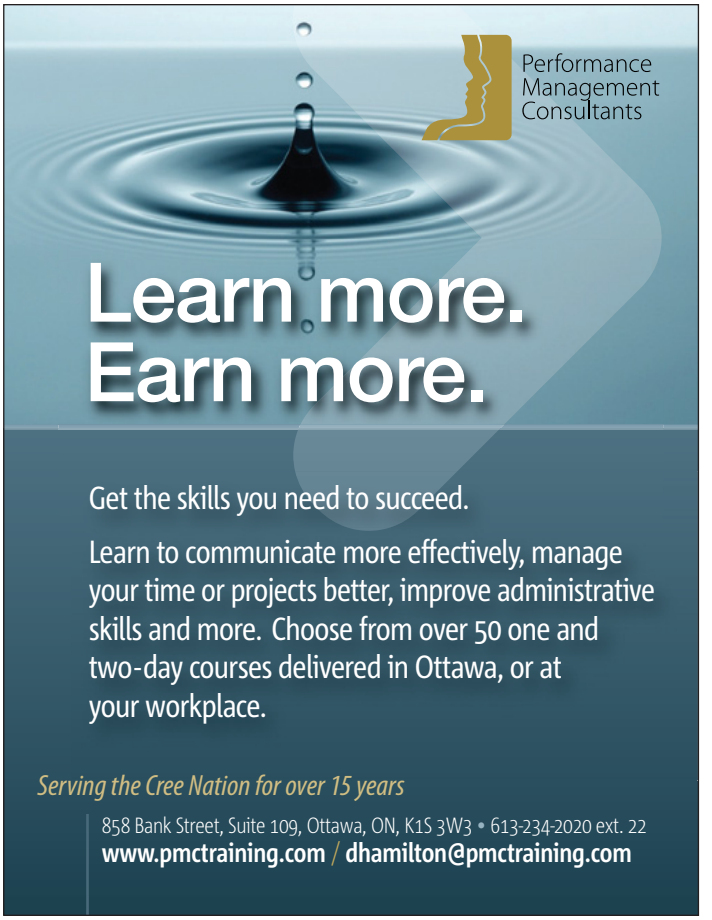
While pork and beef are popular protein options in the Cree communities, Leung said she often has to remind families that the fat needs to be trimmed off of these meats.

As for packing a child's lunchbox for school, Leung said the "plate method" should still apply, which means that half of a child's plate should be comprised of vegetables while the other two quarters are represented by lean meats and alternatives (eggs, cheese, beans) and then whole grains.

Leung also warned that children should only be given water or milk to accompany their lunch, avoiding pop, fruit punches or cocktails and iced teas. All of the latter can simply pad a child's lunch with extra sugar and calories that can pack on the pounds.

Another thing to watch out for are the pre-packaged commercial lunches or "lunchables" that are becoming increasingly popular amongst parents for their convenience. The problem with these products is that they are frequently comprised of very processed foods that are high in sodium and may have been on the shelf for a long time.

"The best thing really is for parents to be the role models and spend some time with their children to tell them what to eat and what is healthy. Parents need to show their children that they eat their vegetables and that they are into eating healthy because children learn from their parents," said Leung.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Hydlo and FRIENDS unplugged

Traditional fisheries in Smokey Hill: Finding cisco

Hydlo and Friends is a program broadcast by JBCCS. Its hosts, Luke and Réal, discuss various matters related to Hydro-Québec activities on Eeyou Istchee lands. Swapping their mike for a pen, they invite you to explore various aspects of the Eastmain-1-A/Sarcelle/Rupert project.

The follow-ups done in 2010 and 2011, since the partial diversion of the Rupert, have demonstrated that there are still cisco stocks in the river. Its behavior is no longer exactly the same, which is a major challenge to the fishermen of Waskaganish, who have to work extra hard to locate the new cisco congregation sites.

Lessons of 2010

In 2010, close to 7,000 cisco were caught in Smokey Hill. That's not much compared to the 20,000 caught over the past three years, but it's also a sign that the cisco are in fact still returning to the Rupert.

At the end of this first postdiversion fishing season, there was much discussion, and many possible explanations for the yield were suggested: logistical problems, missing the peak of upstream migration, different spatial distribution of fish, cisco being stuck at the first rapids (KP 5), cisco going straight upstream instead of gathering at the foot of the Smokey Hill rapids as they used to, and so on.

Sanders Weistche's crew built deep-net fishing installations on the south bank of the Rupert.

HQ/SEBJ and community of Waskaganish working together to find solutions

In fall 2010, the members of the HQ-Cree Monitoring Committee decided to set up a joint committee with HQ/SEBJ representatives and community stakeholders, to come up with solutions before the 2011 fishing season.

The members of this new joint committee, named the Smokey Hill Liaison Committee, have met several times in 2011 to draw up an action plan to monitor the movement of cisco in the river and also to make sure that fishermen and processing facilities would be ready by August.

Traditional knowledge to the rescue

This year, once again, tallymen Clarence Cowboy and Sanders Weistche and their crews have built small pools on the north and south banks of the Rupert at the foot of the Smokey Hill rapids in order to perpetuate traditional dip-net fishing.

Their goal was to create pools similar to those that existed prior to diversion by building small walls with stones and pouches of gravel, with boardwalks above to facilitate scooping.

Results to come! Stay tuned!

Deep-net fishing installations on the north shore of the Rupert

Traditional fisheries in Rupert Bay

At the community's request, HQ/SEBJ funded a traditional fishing program in the bay to monitor the movement of cisco from Pointe Goyau to the mouth of the Rupert. A dozen fishermen from Waskaganish went out in July and August. The end of the fishing season was celebrated with a traditional feast attended by fishermen and HQ/SEBJ representatives.

Supporting community and traditions

Chibougamau's Friendship Centre deals with its recent powwow and financial woes

By Amy German

While it has been around for over 30 years, the Cree Indian Centre in Chibougamau (CICC) has just recently pulled off a major first in a long time: a traditional powwow.

While the city of Chibougamau has not seen a traditional powwow in several generations, CICC director Jo-Ann Toulouse explained that it was something the Native community had wanted for some time.

"At the Friendship Centre we have been doing our Indian Day for over 31 years but there has always been something missing – which were some of the traditional practices. Over the last few years, we have been trying to hold a powwow but it just wasn't happening," said Toulouse.

Toulouse said in recent years there had been discussions of having one in nearby Oujé-Bougoumou, but the community decided it wasn't appropriate to host one on its traditional territory.

"Another reason why we did this was linked to what happened in Oujé last fall when the sweat lodge was torn down. Having a powwow was about demonstrating the beauty of the other side that some of those people may have totally forgotten about," said Manon Richmond, a Cree volunteer who played a large role in organizing the event.

So, on the weekend of August 27-28, over 300 attendees each day headed to the shore of Lac Dufault, part of Wesley Mianscum's traditional trapline, for a powwow that was rich in Native culture and tradition and far from any source of electricity.

"This gave us a rustic space and what was really amazing was that we had 20 eagles flying over the powwow on Saturday morning before we opened up. Most of us have never seen that many eagles before," said Toulouse explaining the spiritual intensity of the setting.

According to Richmond, it took about 130 participants to get this event off the ground each day between the volunteers, vendors, dancers, Elders, drummers and the organizing committee.

Though in direct competition with two other events on the powwow trail that particular weekend – one in La Tuque and another in Kahnesatake – the Chibougamau powwow featured competitive dancers from the neighbouring Native communities of Lac Simon, Masteuiash, Obedjiwan and even one from Oujé-Bougoumou.

These dancers were supported by drum groups Black Wolf and Moose Town, both from Obedjiwan, and Washeskun from Waswanipi, who served as the invited drum for the event.

According to Toulouse, the powwow's veteran was John McComber while Stanley Brazeau served as the arena director. The powwow's Elders were Jane and Able Kitchen and Mike Andy Awashish and Paula Menarik served as the event's head dancers.

Ever since the event, Toulouse said she and Richmond have been receiving nothing but positive feedback.

"We had an Elder from Wendake who was there and he told me that if he had known about the event earlier he would have brought up dancers. He said it was one of the most amazing powwows he had been to in years as traditions and ceremony were respected in a way that had not been seen in a very long time," said Toulouse.

According to Richmond, the event may have served as a platform for healing within Oujé-Bougoumou as there were many attendees from the community and the community itself contributed $500 to help the event.

As mentioned, last fall there was major conflict within Oujé as it was decreed by the Band Office that all traditional activities, like sweat lodges, pow-

wows and other spiritual practices, take place outside community limits. Seeing that many of the attendees and volunteers of the event were from Oujé, those longing to take part in the spirit and tradition of the powwow activities could finally do so.

And, the CICC was delighted to have been instrumental in pulling off this event, despite the financial difficulties it faced.

According to Toulouse, while the CICC may have 27,000 calls or walk-ins from individuals seeking services from the centre, the majority of whom are Crees, they are without any direct funding from the Cree Nation.

This has proved problematic as the centre is in dire need of a new facility to replace its dilapidated digs.

While the CICC has completed a pre-feasibility and feasibility study for a new facility to the tune of $5 million, there is currently no funding for a new building.

According to Toulouse, the CICC offers a myriad of services for those aged 0-100, from community support to a wide range of services for youth. This includes an after-school homework help program, a place for children to go during their lunch hours where they can play and speak their Native language, and cultural activities for individuals who do not have the opportunity to do them within their home communities as they are not living there.

According to Toulouse, the CICC's youth centre is one of the most active in the entire province and the youth who participate want to go hunting, boating and on trips to connect with their culture but they don't or can't necessarily pay for these activities.

The CICC also offers hostelling services for up to 13 people per night, sharing four rooms and one bathroom. These beds often go to Crees visiting Chibougamau for medical services, travelers en route to their home communities or those down for shopping trips. While the Cree Health Board pays for patient beds, this is the only funding that comes to the CICC from any of the Cree entities.

Toulouse said the building has progressively deteriorated over the years because of the way the CICC is funded through the federal and provincial governments.

"The building is tired and there are a lot of reasons for that. When you don't have any collective experience in maintaining buildings, it shows. And, the joy of receiving federal funding is that it's always a one-time deal, and subsequently you can't reapply to any of the grants you had from the time before. There is never any maintenance money and there is never any funding for the upkeep," she said.

Though the CICC does have an annual spring golf tournament fundraiser that garners the centre anywhere from $5000-$12,000, at that rate a new building is far off in the distant future.

But, at the same time, Toulouse remains hopeful that more funding can be found either through funding drives or tapping into other government programs. As the CICC was the first Friendship Centre to open its doors in Quebec and it has maintained what Toulouse describes as a "living room" environment to serve as a gathering place for the Natives living in Chibougamau, one can only hope that some of that warmth may be returned to them.

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Winners: Walleye Category by length & weight of 6 Fish

1st Place: Points: 140,1 Name: Eric Wabanonik~F-150 XTR Ford pick-up 2011
2nd Place: Points: 139,6 Name: Pierre Mercier~4 wheeler Kodiak Yamaha
3rd Place Points: 139,2 Name: Didier Germain~$ 3,000.00 Cash
4th Place: Points: 139,2 Name: Martin Boisvert~Honda Generator
5th Place: Points: 128,0 Name: Daniel Hein~GPS Fish Finder
6th Place: Points: 127,1 Name: Jonathan Offer~Lawnmower
7th Place: Points: 126,65 Name: Jeremy Jolly~Mountain Bike
8th Place: Points: 126,15 Name: Stella Icebound~Binoculars
9th Place: Points: 124,2 Name: Richard Baril~Sleeping Bag
10th Place: Points: 124,15 Name: Richard Ménard~Gift Certificate $ 100.00

Eric Wabanonik

Winners: Pike category by length & weight 1 pike only

1st Place: Points: 66,05 Name: Donald Matoush~ Princecraft Boat Holiday DLX SC & Mercury Motor 60 H.P. & Trailer
2nd Place: Points: 55,05 Name: Yvan Bélanger~$ 3,000.00
3rd Place: Points: 55,05 Name: Ross Kitchen~Nikon Camera D5100
4th Place: Points: 53,05 Name: Derland Georgekish~Gift Certificate $ 500.00
5th Place: Points: 50,00 Name: Raymond Cooper~Fishing Tackle

Donald Matoush

Day 1 Biggest Walleye - Points: 7.05 Name: Eric Wabanonick~$ 1,500/Cash
Day 2 Biggest Walleye - Points: 6.05 Name: Martin Boisvert~$ 1,500/Cash
Day 3 Biggest Walleye - Points: 8.00 Name: Anthony Polson~$ 1,500/Cash

Pierre Mercier

Day 1 Biggest Pike - Points: 9.00 Name: Troy Happyjack~$ 1,000/Cash
Day 2 Biggest Pike - Points: 16.05 Name: Yvan Bélanger~$ 1,000/Cash
Day 3 Biggest Pike - Points: 21.05 Name: Donald Matoush~$ 1,000/Cash

Participation Prize: 1st prize: Damian Bowen~60" TV Plasma-Home Theater System

We still have Jack's map

By Lyle Stewart

Even in death, Jack Layton is still on the job, fighting the good fight.

Viewed from a narrowly political angle, the outpouring of collective grief, mourning and love that followed Layton's passing last month certainly hasn't hurt the federal New Democratic Party he led for eight years. New polling shows the leaderless NDP climbing into a first-place tie with the governing Conservatives in the weeks since Layton tragically succumbed to cancer August 22 – less than three months after he brought the NDP from small-party status to the brink of victory in last spring's historic election.

Four years before the next federal election, you could say the survey is almost meaningless as a measure of the party's chances of actually gaining power. But the rise in support is certainly reflective of some deeper truths. There's no doubt Layton himself intended his death to help his political option. If he has succeeded, however, it's because he knew how to reach people in ways that translate into a more enduring attachment.

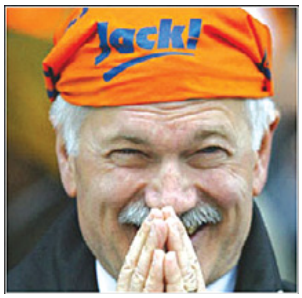
Layton understood that the personal is political. And it's on this level that he reached people in unprecedented numbers during the last election campaign. It also informed the way he faced his own mortality with courage and dignity. His final letter to Canadians will go down in history as an inspiring final act, one that he intended as a political call to arms and at the same time he used to metaphorically fold us all into his arms for a final, loving embrace.

I teared up on reading his "Letter to Canadians," written two days before his death. In a particularly poignant passage, Layton urged other people battling cancer not to give up: "To other Canadians who are on journeys to defeat cancer and to live their lives, I say this: please don't be discouraged that my own journey hasn't gone as well as I had hoped. You must not lose your own hope…. My only other advice is to cherish every moment with those you love at every stage of your journey, as I have done this summer."

Quite coincidentally, the day after Layton died I visited my cousin Lee in a hospice south of Calgary. Like Layton, Lee was a fighter, having twice previously overcome leukemia, the first time more than a dozen years ago, the second last fall. But this cruel disease always seems to come back. And while recovering this spring, it came back, too soon to give Lee a chance.

This time, Lee knew that the third bout would be his last. It didn't stop him from cracking a couple jokes during my brief visit and expressing his love and support for the people he would be leaving behind. Having experienced my mother's long and losing battle with cancer many years ago, I was already aware how cancer victims often end up comforting loved ones who are confronted with the awful reality of imminent mortality.

Only two days later, my cousin Lee died.



"MY FRIENDS, LOVE IS BETTER THAN ANGER. HOPE IS BETTER THAN FEAR. OPTIMISM IS BETTER THAN DESPAIR. SO LET US BE LOVING, HOPEFUL AND OPTIMISTIC. AND WE'LL CHANGE THE WORLD."

So it was hard to separate the emotions I felt that week. On his own deathbed, Layton comforted Canadians and urged his supporters to avoid despair.

Regular readers of this column know that I write from a strong and long-held progressive point of view. Though I don't always agree with party policy, I have volunteered for the federal NDP in the last several elections, especially this past spring. Through my job with the CSN trade union central I have had the opportunity to meet Layton on a number of occasions, the last time during the party's triumphant convention in Vancouver in late June. It was apparent then that he had lost weight since the election though he appeared in good spirits.

So it's evident that a good part of my grief stems from the fear that this unprecedented opportunity to finally actually implement a progressive agenda in the national government may perish with the man most responsible for bringing this dream so close to reality.

But our "bon Jack" has shown us the way, emphasizing in words and his example that it's not about any one person, even him. Hard as it may be to imagine at this juncture who else could fulfil the Layton's destiny to lead the NDP to power as effectively as Jack did, bringing us to the brink of power.

Whoever the new leader will be, their route to success and victory for the NDP is to continue building on the high road that Jack mapped out for us. As he concluded his last letter to us all, "My friends, love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic. And we'll change the world."

We'll miss you, Jack.

UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

Through the eyes of a child

by Xavier Kataquapit

Recently I had to deal with some mice at the camp. I like all animals, great and small. Birds brighten up my day. However, I am not crazy about flying and agitating insects like mosquitoes, black flies and hornets. My little friends, Jack and Brynn Vokes, let me know that they too are not fans of many biting insects when they were with me at their lakeside cottage recently. They do however, like mice.

Nobody thinks much of swatting at flying insects and dropping them out of the sky but the thought of killing a little mouse is not accepted well by many people. Children like Jack and Brynn, who are southern folk that live near Hamilton and were raised on funny mouse characters in books and movies, don't like the idea of dealing violently with Mickey or Minnie.

In fact, when they realized that there were mice running around in the walls of the old cottage at night their eyes lit up. No doubt images of Mickey and Minnie trying to survive in a hostile world came to their minds. When they saw my mousetraps they were not at all impressed. I found myself trying to explain with the help of their dad Rob and mom Brooke that mice were not good to have around a house. I complained about them lurking in corners and shadows and then coming out to eat what they could of any food we had sitting around at night. It was not easy to portray the little mice as criminal, sneaky, dirty and disease carrying vermin but I did my best. The kids didn't buy it.

Out of respect for Jack and Brynn's concerns for the local mice I decided not to load up the mousetraps. Actually, it did not matter all that much anyway because these mice seemed somehow to understand full well the design and use of the mousetrap. They were wilderness mice but somehow had city street sense. Perhaps they had relatives in Toronto or Montreal that visited now and then with stories of all the latest gadgets being produced to kill their kind. I was having so little luck trapping them that I had turned to my last resort by using crazy glue to fasten a peanut to the release lever on the trap. That worked once and then somehow they managed to figure out how to steal the peanut with no consequences. Don't ask me how. That will forever remain a mystery.

Jack and Brynn were very happy that I had no luck in catching any mice during their stay. To be honest their reaction to mice trapping also got me thinking. Through their eyes I realized that there were alternatives to killing Mickey and Minnie. When I really thought about it I realized that I was part of the problem. I had moved into their territory and established my place. Also, I had an abundance of food around and to Mickey and Minnie this meant an easy meal. The other problem was that the old cottage had fallen into a sad state and although I had patched it up for the most part there were still cracks and spaces here and there that made it easy for the local mice population to come and go as if they were visiting a mall.

It dawned on me that with a little more work I could seal up the cracks and holes where the mice were getting in. This was no easy task as a mouse has a very flexible skeleton and can squeeze through the tiniest of cracks. So, I went to work patching every suspected mouse entry point I could find. I cut wood, snipped pieces of tin, hammered everything into place and stepped back to see the results. They stopped coming around almost immediately.

I found it strange to be able to sleep the entire night without being awakened by the sound of scattering mouse feet in the walls or above me in the attic. There were no more sounds from the kitchen of boxes being chewed or plastic being rattled. The best thing was that I did not have to deal with the corpse of some failed attempt to free a bit of cheese or a peanut from one of my many mousetraps. Not that I was terrorized or anything by my little mouse friends. I grew up on the land and spent many, many nights in prospectors' tents and old cabins where the mice had the run of these places. We just shared the space with them and carried on with our daily lives.

So, it took two southern Mohawk kids, Jack and Brynn, to remind me that there were other ways to deal with the Mickeys and Minnies of this world rather than exterminating them. Meegwetch to Jack and Brynn for reminding me of this teaching me this lesson through the eyes of a child.

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BIRTHDAYS

Darwyn Adrian Henry Ronald Hester will be turning seventeen on September 9th, 2011. From the moment you were born, no matter how old and how tall you are, I will always remember the moment we shared as a mother and son. I love you even though you never called me mom or mommy or even when you yelled you don't use mom or mommy you say "hey". Well this is this first time you're away, far away for your birthday. Happy 17th birthday Darwyn! We miss and love you. I hope you had a wonderful birthday in Bathurst, New Brunswick. With love, your mom, Charlene, Stanley, Keith, Biley, Damilynn. XOXOXO

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Where to get help: bilingual, anonymous, confidential and free phone services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Missing Children's Network: They'll help you find kids who have run away or disappeared. 514-843-4333.

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Parent helpline: 1-800-361-5085 (www.parenthelpline.ca)

Drugs: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.drogue-aidereference.qc.ca)

Gambling: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence: 1-800-363-9010 (www.sosviolenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality resources center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm) (www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688. (www.nwsm.info)

Suicide Action Québec: 1-866-277-3553

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: http://www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources.html

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News Media Serving the Public Interest

I encourage you to take part in a public consultation on the policies developed by the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine to encourage news media to serve the public interest.

To take part in the public consultation, you may

- Submit a brief **by September 23, 2011** (registration mandatory)
- Speak at the consultation (registration mandatory)

You may also attend the public consultation session that will be held near you in the fall of 2011.

To register or to obtain a copy of the consultation document, visit the MCCCF website at www.mcccf.gouv.qc.ca/consultation or call 1 888 380-8882.

We look forward to hearing your input on the actions proposed in this process of reflection and discussion.

Christine St-Pierre

Minister of Culture, Communications and the Status of Women

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